World Chronicle

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GUEST: Andy Bearpark, CBE
Deputy Special Representative of the
UN Secretary-General and
EU Representative in Kosovo

JOURNALIST: John Metzler, USA Radio Network
Afsane Bassir Pour, Le Monde

MODERATOR: Ian Williams

THE EUROPEAN UNION IN KOSOVO

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has been involved with implementing the civilian aspects of rehabilitating and reforming Kosovo. Those sectors are: humanitarian assistance, civil administration, democratization and institution-building, reconstruction and economic development. In this edition of **World Chronicle,** Andy Bearpark, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and European Union Representative of Kosovo, talks about the challenges facing UNMIK in its task to help the people in Kosovo rebuild their lives and heal the wounds of conflict.

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Executive Producer: Richard Sydenham
Director: Livingston Hinckley
Production Assistant: Corazon A. Icasas

ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues.

Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

WILLIAMS: Hello, I'm Ian Williams, sitting in for Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

In 1999, the Security Council authorized the UN Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, known as UNMIK, so the people there could live in peace and enjoy substantial autonomy. UNMIK authority includes all legislative and executive powers, as well as the administration of the judiciary. As part of UNMIK, the European Union is in charge of the rebuilding effort, of strengthening economic growth and stability and creating the conditions for a modern, open market economy.

Our guest today is Ambassador Andy Bearpark, CBE, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the European Union's Representative in Kosovo. Joining me to talk with Ambassador Bearpark are John Metzler of *USA Radio Network*, and Afsane Bassir Pour of *Le Monde*.

Ambassador Bearpark, welcome to **World Chronicle**.

BEARPARK: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: It's not a very secure seat you're sitting in, apart from the one that you're actually sitting on physically. In Kosovo there's a lot of ambiguity about whether Kosovo is a province of Yugoslavia, whether it's headed for independence, whether its status is going to be resolved or not, whether it's been determined. Do you think the ambiguity can go on much longer without creating more problems for you in your role than you can cope with?

BEARPARK: The ambiguities may create greater challenges but not that many if the truth be known on the economic side because if you look at the people of Kosovo – whatever ethnicity – if you look at the people, what they want is a better economic future. They want jobs for themselves. They don't want to be dependent upon aid. They want to have money so they can build their own houses, they can enjoy a reasonable lifestyle, and they want to have a better future for their children than they have themselves. So those sorts of economic aspirations are the case regardless of the political outcome. So in economic terms, the future of Kosovo is clear. We want it to be sustaining – self-sustaining – to have proper economic development and a reasonable standard of living for everybody. So I think that objective

maintains whatever else happens and gives us on the economic development side a useful clarity of purpose that perhaps others don't quite so easily have.

WILLIAMS: But is that feasible in a landlocked country surrounded by people who are looking – a landlocked province I should say – surrounded by people looking at it with varying degrees of hostility? The customs barriers, occasional stoppages on the borders?

BEARPARK: There are problems and I'd be the last person to deny the problems but if one looks within Kosovo at what's going on, the people are entrepreneurial. They want to trade. They want to make money. Kosovo is not the richest place in the world in terms of natural resources. It's not got the gold mines literally that people thought it had for hundreds of years. The gold mines are there but they're not that rich anymore. But it has got a natural resource base, it has got some minerals, it's got reasonable agricultural land. So if you add that to people who want to make a go of it the answer is yes, the economy can be self-sustaining. And I despair when people look and say, "Will it be as rich as Denmark?" Well, the answer is quite possibly not. But Kosovo is in the Balkans. So when I look at Macedonia, when I look at Bosnia and Herzegovina, when I look at Serbia proper, I see no reason why Kosovo can't have an economy on a par with those.

METZLER: One can be self-sustaining Ambassador but at the same time the international community has, should we say, frozen the game that had been in progress. It has clearly established the conditions for a better future for the Kosovars but ultimately doesn't it come down to a referendum where the people of Kosovo -- all the peoples – determine if they want self-determination? What is the political road ahead? And I think establishing a political future and a political framework will make the other pieces fall in line.

BEARPARK: That's at the centre of political life anywhere but I think that we're on a path and we're seeing progress down that path. Last year, we had the municipal elections – the first ever elections of that sort within Kosovo – and I think the international community was absolutely delighted, if the truth be known, at how well those elections ran and how little violence there was. I can't remember any violence to be honest. So that was one step down the path. Very soon now we will have the provincial elections. Then we have to put in place the structures that will follow on from those elections. So I think you can't solve all the problems, you can't get to the end state just like that, but I think we are seeing progress as what was envisaged in Security Council Resolution 1244.

BASSIR POUR: Going back to what Ian mentioned – the question of independence – you can't talk about Kosovo without that obviously. You live there. Do you feel, do you hear people talk about this? Do they consider themselves a separate country already? And then you are going to introduce the Euro, what would this mean for relations with Yugoslavia, for example?

BEARPARK: I think if you look at the introduction of the euro I see no difficulties at all there. Kosovo, through choice, has been using the deutsche mark for the last two years. The truth is, of course, that the deutsche mark is no longer an independent currency. The currency in that regard is part of the euro zone already so it's a technical measure in terms of changing over from the deutsche mark to the euro. And when I look around the region, in banking relations I go up to Belgrade and I talk to Central Bank there and all they want to talk to me about is the technical questions of how we'll transfer the currency, how we will convert the currency. So I think that the adoption of the Euro is firstly a technical issue. Secondly, if it does have political significance, and I hope that it does, that political significance is not to do with weakening any ties in the region but it's to do with saying that Kosovo is a part of Europe, Kosovo's future lies in Europe. So no, it's not one of the candidate countries for the next year or two but if we look ahead to the future then we certainly see that Kosovo will adopt European standards in all matters. And that's what the people of Kosovo want.

With regards to your first question yes, indeed, I live there and I don't think there can be any doubt -- one does not need an opinion poll. Just walking down the street the vast majority of Kosovar-Albanians would say we want to be independent. But I think where it gets a little more interesting perhaps is what they mean by that independence and what they mean is having a unit where they're in control. So I think that the independence debate will go on every day in the Kosovar press and why shouldn't it? That's a perfectly healthy sign of democracy. But I don't feel bad about saying well that's a way away yet. Let's get this place functioning properly first. Let's make sure the schools are funded, the roads are repaired, people have got jobs and let's not worry too much about that question just for the moment.

BASSIR POUR: Just a follow up. When you answered my question you spoke of Kosovo as if it's a country already. You say "Kosovo will be in the future part of the European Union". So what happens to the rest of Yugoslavia? Would that be envisaged also?

BEARPARK: I think there's no doubt whatsoever that the future of the Balkans as a whole lies within Europe. And my colleagues from Brussels are already having discussions with people in Belgrade about the future of Yugoslavia so I don't separate out Kosovo in that way. What I do though is -- in terms of my day-to-day work there the fact is that Kosovo does have borders, it does have boundary lines and within those borders and boundary lines I have to treat it as one discreet entity, if that's the right word, as Security Council Resolution 1244 envisaged.

WILLIAMS: On that point, you began issuing passports last year for Kosovars didn't you or travel documents?

BEARPARK: I think travel document is the word. Yes, the fact is that Kosovars want to travel and everybody wanted to travel. This is a perfectly reasonable aspiration and of course for people from Kosovo they have a long tradition of working in Western Europe and sending money back. If we look at the economy today in Kosovo some people would argue that it's to a great extent dependent, if not entirely dependent, on the remittances from overseas. So I think that UNMIK took the perfectly logical step of saying that if these people don't have access to passports in the way that say I do coming from a European Union country, or people in the United States do, it's perfectly reasonable that we, UNMIK, should issue some sort of travel document to allow them to travel around the world.

WILLIAMS: But do the neighbouring republics like Macedonia and Serbia accept the travel documents yet?

BEARPARK: Macedonia I understand has indeed accepted the travel documents. Serbia, I think the answer to that would be that for the majority of Kosovar-Albanians their aspirations don't lie in travelling in that direction.

WILLIAMS: Good point.

METZLER: Ambassador, you've described the *de facto* situation very well but yet again we come back to the legal, the *de jure* situation that Kosovo belongs legally to Yugoslavia. And this is something that is yet to be resolved and until that is resolved this is the point, as in the Greek chorus, we keep coming back to. What would the next step be after the elections?

BEARPARK: I think after the elections the priority, the absolute priority, is to put in place the institutions of the provision of self-government. So these are the institutions which

are familiar to anybody around the world. Obviously, in terms of government administration – without worrying about the definition of government -- we need to have a functioning ministry looking after the finances, we need to have somebody looking after road repair, we need to have somebody after schools. So the number one priority as soon as the elections are done and we know who the winners are, then it would be to get these institutions up and running. And that's why we from the European Union side, with our colleagues in the United Nations, are doing an enormous amount of work at the moment to prepare the way for that, because if we look back over the last couple of years, a lot of these jobs have been done by internationals and that was inevitable in the early days but it shouldn't go on that way. So large scale training programmes, large scale institution building, those are the key priorities.

METZLER: And certainly, in terms of reconstruction, the international community has performed admirably. Having said that, going beyond building a school or rebuilding a bridge or a house what about erasing the psychological scars of the conflict which started all of this a couple of years ago? These must be traumatic experiences for all the communities in Kosovo?

BEARPARK: They are traumatic experiences and it's very, very difficult. I've always argued throughout the last ten years that reconstruction in the Balkans is easy when you're thinking in terms of physical reconstruction. If you want to rebuild a bridge throw money at it, if you want to rebuild it more quickly throw twice as much money at it. It's a perfectly easy thing to do – it just costs cash. But rebuilding society, that's far more difficult. And a lot of work is being done there but I think that's the one thing that can't be rushed. You can't say we are going to heal these wounds tomorrow because we want it to be healed tomorrow. It doesn't work that way. So I think that before I went to Kosovo I was in Bosnia and Herzegovina for several years trying to promote minority return and if one looks back at that, the facts are that between 1997 and 2001 the rate of minority return increased exponentially every year. And the reason for that, in large part, was due to the fact that the wounds were healing. People were prepared to forget the past. Now, in that respect I think it's still early days in Kosovo. And I think if one looks back and looks at the lessons that have been learned from this, and similar missions, one would say that maybe we want to spend a bit more on what is called the software and a bit less on what is called the hardware. But even with added adjustments in spending I don't think results can come that quickly.

WILLIAMS: Do you have any numbers for how many Serbs and Roma and other minorities who fled immediately after the conflict have returned since?

BEARPARK: The numbers are relatively low in Kosovo. I think we're talking in the ones of thousands not the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands that we're able to talk about in Bosnia.

BASSIR POUR: John mentioned reconstruction; I see that you say reconstruction is now largely complete. It's an extraordinary feat considering all the damage that was done during the war. Now you say if you throw money it can be done. Was it only that the European Union poured a lot of money? Had it to do with the enterprising nature of the Kosovars or what is this due to?

BEARPARK: I think that there are three major factors there. The first one is that in fact the damage was not as bad as people feared. The bombing campaign was fairly limited both in terms of time and in terms of the targets and it wasn't for instance, as in some of the other Balkan wars where there had been five or six years in which the destruction could take place and accumulate. So I think that there was less destruction in that sense than people thought. What you had was simply slightly different and that was the result of ten years of under-investment. So you're actually dealing with a system that was on the verge of collapse rather than buildings that had been destroyed in many cases. So that was the first factor. The second factor is that the main aid donors, of which the European Commission and the European Union are the largest, had learned the lessons from the past. That's absolutely heartening to see. Normally, lessons are something that you learn and then ignore but this time the European Commission revised all of its procedures and said we'll do things in a totally different way. And that meant that the money was able to be spent a lot quicker and a lot more effectively in a short time than had previously been the case. But then the third reason, the third reason is the biggest one, and that is of course the belief of the Kosovar-Albanians, the Kosovar people, that they are rebuilding Kosovo. So I was an aid donor once so it's lovely to take credit and say this is what we did. No, no, no. It's the people of Kosovo who have done it. And if you just look at the figures you'll see the enormous inflow of money that's come from the earnings these people had overseas. But then if you just walk down any street in Pristina today, you will see 10, 20 houses in that street being reconstructed and I very much

doubt if the aid donors are doing both those houses for the people who live there who are doing those houses.

WILLIAMS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Ambassador Andy Bearpark, CBE, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the European Union Representative in Kosovo.

BASSIR POUR: Now, going back to reconstruction and money, you were also based in Rwanda I see in your CV where, hopefully, the war in the Great Lakes Region, in the Congo will be finished and the Congo is in ruins. You said that donors have learned their lessons, can we expect some kind of at least similar kind of help for that region of the world or does the European Union feel that because Kosovo is in Europe that's where the money should go?

BEARPARK: My colleagues in the Commission who deal with Rwanda, who deal with the Great Lakes, are certainly very, very conscious of the enormous problems there. And if one looks back over the last one year, two years, five years – it's almost ten years since I was there – the amounts of money that the Europeans have put in is quite significant. So I think yes, there will be programmes to assist with the reconstruction there. Will there be lessons to be learned from the Balkans? I actually think there will be. And the key lesson that I would try and send across would be to get the systems and the structures right. Don't worry too much about the detailed results because they will follow by themselves. And the classic example I use in the Balkans is don't worry too much about the credit schemes, worry an enormous amount about getting functioning banks because if you've got functioning banks the credit schemes will follow automatically without you having to worry about them. And in my view the same would be applicable in the Great Lakes. Look at the software not just the hardware and then make sure the systems are working. And a relatively small investment in those systems can often pay an enormous dividend in terms of the results that the people will see.

METZLER: Ambassador, getting back to the people of Kosovo, we have had searingly poignant images etched into our memories of a million people fleeing when the Serbs and Milosevic's people chased them out. It was said within a few months after the end of the conflict, most returned very, very quickly – almost magically. I'm wondering if those return numbers have been nearly that million we've kept hearing about and why haven't we seen the

same sort of thing in Bosnia where people have, let's say, returned from Austria or from Germany?

BEARPARK: I think we're talking about very different sorts of return. If one looks at the exodus from Kosovo it took place over a very, very short period of time and the people, the refugees who went to Macedonia and onwards, in the majority of cases were staying together. So you have the pictures I'm sure we all saw on TV of those enormous camps near Skopje. Well, because the people were together, still together as family units, it meant that it was relatively easy for people to return en masse once they had the protection of NATO with the K-For forces there. Bosnia, of course, was rather different. The war took place over many years, people dispersed around the world, and I think that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who keeps very good figures on these things, would say that the longer people spend away the more difficult it is for them to return. So in the case of Kosovo we talk about people being away for a couple of months. If we look back to Bosnia and Herzegovina some people have been away five, six years. So I think that's why one sees the different rates of return, the different sorts of return in those two situations.

METZLER: And have most of them returned then? Say the proverbial figure of a million that we all heard about, most of those people have returned though?

BEARPARK: I would say yes and I think that we freely admit within UNMIK, within Kosovo, that we don't have the best statistics in the world on anything. But certainly anecdotally or looking around or talking to people, it would seem to me that the majority of people have returned.

WILLIAMS: One of the reasons I keep stumbling over your long and cumbersome title is that it has a long and cumbersome background to it. I mean you have two of what you could consider the most notorious bureaucracies in the world working in conjunction of the Kosovars. You've got the European Union and you are the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations - the United Nations Mission in Kosovo. How easy is it to reconcile those roles? I mean, what different specialities? Does the UN provide the brains and the EU provide the money, for example?

BEARPARK: I don't think it works quite that way but it's certainly an interesting combination. I think that one of the factors that makes the international community more or less successful in different parts of the world is how well they work together. Or it has to be

said in some places how badly they've worked together. And I think there was a very clear recognition on the part of the international community that when it came to Kosovo that it was vital that the international community acted as one, that we didn't have divisions within that grouping. So the system that was put in place, although it may look complex at first sight, is I, think, absolutely crystal clear. The United Nations is responsible – we talk about a United Nations resolution and a United Nations mission and a United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General. So we have that absolute clarity in terms of, you know, the famous question of who do I phone up when I want to know about Kosovo. The answer is, of course, Hans Haekkerup in Pristina. So we have that clarity.

WILLIAMS: Hans Haekkerup is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General?

BEARPARK: Is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

WILLIAMS: To whom you're Deputy?

BEARPARK: I'm the deputy indeed. But then we have the recognition that different parts of the international community have different roles that they can usefully play. So in Kosovo it was decided that there should be four what were at the time called pillars – the four pillars of the mission. And one of those pillars is the one that I have the honour to head: that's the European Union pillar. And because the European Union inevitably and correctly was going to be the major source of funding for the reconstruction effort, it was decided that the pillar that the European Union would work on would be reconstruction and economic development. So in that sense, although the titles are cumbersome – and I must admit I invent new ones every day, whether it be head of the EU pillar or EU director I can sort of choose them at will. And the fact is that the system is absolutely simple. I am a deputy to the Special Representative. It's a totally integrated mission in that regard and one of the things that gives me the greatest pleasure is that over the last year that I have been there I've been trying to break down the barriers between UN staff and EU staff to the extent that I am trying to make it invisible so that people don't quite know who they work for. And why should they? The answer is they work for UNMIK and it doesn't matter whether they've come from Brussels, whether they've come from New York or wherever else it might be.

BASSIR POUR: One of the main problems of every country emerging from a conflict is demobilization – the arms that are still on the street. How is that going? Is it going well? Are there any new ideas for demobilization?

BEARPARK: I think demobilization has gone perfectly well in Kosovo because we weren't talking about a standing army. We were talking about the KLA. Agreements were reached in the early days and I think in terms of a standing military force then I see no particular problem. But where I do still see an awful problem is the level of violence generally in Kosovo is far higher than is acceptable and, to an extent, that level of violence is being fuelled by the easy availability of guns. I'm not saying these people wouldn't be violent anyway but the fact is that when you've got an AK-47 you can be a lot more destructively violent. So I think that the free way in which these guns are available is a problem. Now there have been various amnesties. They've worked to a greater or lesser extent. One programme, which I'm working on at the moment, is the idea of arms exchange and what I want to do is appeal to the people themselves, not to military leaders or guerrilla leaders – they don't want to listen to me, I know that – but to appeal to individuals, to parents and say look, if you know where some of these arms caches are -- and information like that is often around – if you know where they are, let's start trading. Let's have a programme whereby we'll collect those arms and then we, the European Union, will provide money to do something that you want. And my pet project – right this is a pet project – is to flood the schools with computers because the children of Kosovo want to be computer literate. They want access to computer systems but like anywhere in the world there aren't enough computers in the schools. So I'd like to see that being done at the very, very grassroots levels. To be able to say to parents if in this school's area 500 guns are handed in -- I don't know what the numbers will be – that will mean two extra computers will be arriving. And one key thing will be quickly. Not arriving in some dim and distant point in the future which may or may not happen – people get very cynical about that – but arriving tomorrow. So that's just one very small scheme. I don't think it's going to change the entire world but I think it has a contribution it can make.

METZLER: Ambassador, after the revolution in Belgrade many Serbs said we want to live in a normal country. Would you say Kosovo was on the verge of being a normal place to be?

BEARPARK: I think Kosovo is getting more and more normal with every day that passes. Every morning we have a meeting within UNMIK and we listen to the statistics as to what sorts of crimes were committed over the preceding 24 hours. There are two things that strike me about these figures. The first one is that in the year I've been there, they've been going down. So are they too high? Yes, they're far too high. Are they wrong? Yes, they're wrong. But the fact is that normality is beginning to creep in. And the second thing is that when I look at them I have to tell people well, hang on. Let's not get too excited at times. Violence exists in every society. Violence exists in what we call the most civilized of countries so let's look at the good indicators rather than just the bad indicators. And I see more and more of those good indicators. Traffic jams is one. Personally I detest them but it means that people are moving around. The other one is that just a few months ago we introduced one-way streets. I mean these are normality indicators in a big way that shows that society is returning to normal.

BASSIR POUR: Except that this violence is spilling into Macedonia. Now that could become a problem, couldn't it?

BEARPARK: I think the events in Macedonia most certainly are a problem. The risk of further insecurity in the Balkans is the nightmare for everybody who lives there and works there. I think though that with the security presence we have in Kosovo it is possible to isolate, to an extent, the events in Macedonia from the people of Kosovo and that's certainly what everybody is trying to do at the moment.

BASSIR POUR: Good luck.

WILLIAMS: We don't have much time now but I noticed in the documentation you provided that two-thirds of the budget is coming from local sources. What are the local sources?

BEARPARK: The most important local source is, at the moment, the collection of sales tax. We collect a sales tax at our borders and boundary lines. When we all arrived in Kosovo at the very beginning there was no taxation system. There was nothing. So the donors had to pay for everything. Inevitably, that couldn't carry on. No one could have a self-sustaining economy when its reliance is upon donors so we introduced that taxation. We're now changing over from that sales tax to value added tax, a tax which is widely understood throughout the European Union. And it's through taxes like that, taxes on property, taxes on

companies, taxes on the profits which are made, that we're managing to maintain that revenue base. That means that we've been able to move down from a wholly donor funded budget. Now this year, we have just one-third of the money from the donors, two-thirds from local resources and our firm ambition is that next year we'll have a balanced budget.

WILLIAMS: So there's no such thing as a really free, free market I think. Ambassador Bearpark, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**.

Our guest has been Ambassador Andy Bearpark, CBE, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the European Union Representative in Kosovo. He was interviewed by John Metzler of *USA Radio Network* and Afsane Bassir Pour of *Le Monde*.

I'm Ian Williams, sitting in for Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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